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Message Text

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15
ACTION INR-11

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE CANBERRA 5637

FOR INR/OIL/BI

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, AS
SUBJ: APPOINTMENT OF FORMER WHITLAM PRIVATE SECRETARY AS HEAD
OF PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT

1. PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM ANNOUNCED AUG 23, 1974 HIS SELECTION OF MR. JOHN MENADUE AS HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET EFFECTIVE FEB 1, 1975. MENADUE, AGED 39, IS A FORMER PRIVATE SECRETARY TO WHITLAM WHEN THE ALP LEADER WAS IN OPPOSITION AND IS CURRENTLY GENERAL MANAGER OF NEWS LIMITED WHOSE PUBLICATIONS INCLUDE THE SYDNEY NEWSPAPERS DAILY MIRROR, DAILY TELEGRAPH, AND THE AUSTRALIAN. MENADUE WILL REPLACE SIR JOHN BUNTINGWHO WILL BECOME HIGH COMMISSIONER IN THE UNITED KINGDOM ALSO IN FEBRUARY NEXT YEAR.

2. THE MENADUE APPOINTMENT HAS BEEN CRITICIZED IN THE PRESS AS UNDERMINING THE MORALE AND CONFIDENCE OF SENIOR PUBLIC SERVANTS PARTICULARLY PERMANENT HEADS WHO REPORTEDLY SEE IN THE MENADUE APPOINTMENT A BAD PRECEDENT FOR THE OBJECTIVITY AND POSSIBLY THE ASPIRATIONS OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE. IN MAKING THE APPOINTMENT THE PRIME MINISTER IS REPORTED TO FEEL THAT MENADUE WILL HELP TO "ACTIVATE" TOP-LEVEL THINKING IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE.

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3. MENADUE WILL BE ONE OF THE YOUNGEST PERMANENT HEADS OF THE

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COMMONWEALTH PUBLIC SERVICE. HE IS MARRIED WITH FOUR CHILDREN AND MAKES HIS HOME IN BIRCHGROVE, A SYDNEY SUBURB. HE HAS A BACHELOR OF ECONOMICS DEGREE FROM ADELAIDE UNIVERSITY. A PHOTOGRAPH OF MR. MENADUE FOLLOWS BY AIR POUCH.

4. COMMENT: WHITLAM'S DECISION TO APPOINT MENADUE AS A PERMANENT HEAD PROBABLY REFLECTS HIS FRUSTRATION IN DEALING WITH SENIOR PUBLIC SERVANTS. IT ALSO REFLECTS WHITLAM'S DESIRE TO BRING "IDEA MEN" INTO THE PUBLIC SERVICE IN ADDITION TO HIS OWN PERSONAL STAFF. IT IS NO SECRET THAT HIS PERSONAL STAFF HAS BEEN OVERTAXED IN ATTEMPTING TO FORWARD WHITLAM POLICIES AND THAT THERE IS A NEED FOR GREATER COORDINATION OF EFFORT IN THE BUREAUCRACY TO THIS END. TENSION WAS INEVITABLE BETWEEN THE SUSPICIOUS NEW LABOR GOVERNMENT AND A PUBLIC SERVICE WHICH HAD IMPLEMENTED LIBERAL/COUNTRY PARTY POLICIES FOR 5 YEARS.BUNTING IS PERHAPS THE MOST SENIOR AND DISTINGUISHED OF AUSTRALIAN CAREER OFFICIALS, AND THE OBVIOUS FACT THAT HE IS BEING KICKED UPSTAIRS IS OFFENSIVE TO HIS COLLEAGUES. IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT HOW SUCCESSFUL AN AGGRESSIVE YOUNGER POLITICAL APOINTEE WILL BE IN THIS POTENTIALLY KEY POSITION.
HARROP

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